

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

ENGLISH: GRADE 7 and 8

Department Contact Information

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The Department's Educational Philosophy

The need to communicate is central to humanity. Young adolescents, in particular, need to communicate their views of self and the world as a means of understanding and defining, and expanding their thinking. Through writing and appreciating the writings of others, we believe young adolescents grow in their ability to think and to understand themselves and their relationships.

Appreciation of written expression, both one's own and that of others, is the core of the R. J. Grey Jr. High School English Curriculum. Through the discipline of writing and through the study of published works of literature, we believe that the students develop not only their communication skills but also a life-long love of learning.

The English Department derives its educational philosophy from the published philosophies of the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District and the R.J. Grey Junior High School.

Guiding Principles

- Write well in a variety of forms.
- Read accurately and with critical insight and analytical judgment.
- Participate effectively in discussions and other oral activities.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the nature of language in writing, reading, and speaking.
- Demonstrate personal involvement in and enjoyment of the spoken and written word.

Essential Skills and Objectives for reading, writing, speaking, and grammar have been determined for the students at R. J. Grey. In general, these skills are developed in grade seven and reviewed, reinforced, and expanded in grade eight. They are the foundation of every activity and align with the state learning standards.

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Course Frequency: 260 minutes per week; the frequency depends on the team schedule. The class might meet in single blocks daily, double blocks every other day, or a combination of the two.

Credits Offered: It is a required course for the junior high school. No credits are offered.

Prerequisites: None

Background to the Curriculum

The basic framework, topics, skills and objectives have been in place for many years, thanks to strong departmental leadership. The essential skills reflect the basic communication skills of reading and writing, with a strong focus on effective written communication. As a department we continually review and update the curriculum – adding new literature titles, updating thematic units, developing new thematic units to connect with the social studies curriculum, checking the alignment of our skill objectives with state standards.

The essential skills and objectives are consistent with the Massachusetts Curriculum frameworks. Differentiated instruction provides opportunities for students to develop and achieve at their own rate, most consistently demonstrating above-grade-level mastery.

Curriculum Connections

Helping students make connections between reading and writing, other curriculum areas, history, the world today, and their own lives is an integral component of the curriculum. Frequently, there are lively discussions about current, and sometimes sensitive, topics. To the extent that time allows, teachers work with their other team members to weave curriculum concepts together. There are frequent connections between English and Social Studies. Literature and other readings help bring history and current issues alive.

Thematic Units

Thematic units and genre studies comprise the curriculum content. Each unit consists of focus questions about the theme or genre and activities that address these questions and provide opportunities for students to develop and address the essential skills. Students are actively involved in a range of activities within the communication spectrum, either individually or with groups of varying sizes. These units, from which teachers select three to five a year according to their needs and interests, are divided between grades seven and eight.

Each unit is designed to reflect the interests and needs of the early adolescent. In many units, to provide for individual differences and interests, students have a choice of readings. They are introduced to several novels, varying in story line and reading difficulty, but all on the unit theme. Audio versions of several novels are available at the school library or can be obtained from local libraries. Students also may have independent reading opportunities throughout the year. The choice of thematic units and the literature involved in the unit may vary from team to team and year to year; however, the *Essential Skills and Objectives* are consistent for all students.

Class time

In the classroom, time is divided between teacher-centered and student-centered activities. On student-centered days, the students receive general directions or instructions from the teacher and then use the class period to complete an assignment or work on a long-term project. In these situations, the teacher acts as a coach, checking in with students to address specific questions or concerns. In the class, students work individually or with groups of varying size to actively engage in a range of activities within the communication spectrum. They are at all times encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and to become life-long learners.

Core Topics/Questions/Concepts/Skills

Grade 7

Thematic Units

- Conflict
- Family Relationships
- Historical Perspectives
- Social Justice (including bullying, stereotypes, etc.)

Genres

- Short story
- Biography
- Mystery
- Poetry
- Drama

Grade 8

Thematic Units

- Self-Awareness/ Identity
- Cultural Perspectives
- Drama/ Shakespeare
- Justice
- War and Peace
- Memoirs
- Science fiction

<p><u>Related Skills</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1] Use a variety of resources and techniques for research and presentation of information. 2] Identify and analyze the techniques used by a variety of media and evaluate their effects. 3] Create and follow scoring guides or assessment criteria. 	<p>Related Skills 2, 3, 26, 27</p>
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Assessment

- Writing assignments and/or parts of the writing process: Teachers provide rubrics employing FCAs (Focus Correction Areas), using the John Collins framework, “Writing Across the Curriculum.”
- Literal and inferential comprehension questions based on the reading
- Reading response journals and other reflective activities
- Oral presentations
- Projects
- Quizzes, tests, and application of grammar skills and concepts
- Paired or grouped discussions on readings and/or projects
- Portfolio assessments

Materials and Resources

Teacher-developed thematic units: Held in a common area and central to the curriculum, these units contain the rationale, focus questions, objectives, and teacher assignments accumulated over several years. Included are suggestions for reading from our anthology and from the class sets of books and novels owned by the department.

Prentice-Hall Literature Anthology, *Timeless Voices, Timeless Themes*, 2005. Bronze level – grade 7; silver level – grade 8 with many supplementary resources, including audio versions.

The Writer’s Craft. New York : McDougall, Littell & Company, 1994. Red: grade 7; Green: Grade 8: 1 class set in each room

Write Source 2000: A Guide to Writing, Thinking, and Learning. Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

Professional reference books are located in the English bookroom.

Audio-visual: Many of the curriculum books are available on tape or CD in the school library. Others are easily accessible at the town library.

School library: The librarian is available to give “book talks” on a theme, a genre, and/or open-ended free choice, independent “good reads.”

Literature (class sets of novels and short stories)

Anne Frank
Anne of Avonlea
Anne of Green Gables
Birthday Murder
Break With Charity
Call of the Wild
Chain of Fire
Child of the Owl
Chinese American Literature
Contender
Crazy Lady
December Stillness
Dogsong
Eight Plus One
Eric
Fellowship of the Ring
Freedom Songs
Friedrich
Glory Field
Goody Hall
Hatchet
Hobbit
Holly's Secret
Homecoming

Incident at Hawk's Hill
Island on Bird Street
Johnny Tremain
Journey to America
Journey to Jo'burg
Just Like Martin
Kidnapped
Let the Circle be Unbroken
Lupita Manana
Lyddie
Man Who Was Poe
Mirror for Witches
Misfits
My Brother Sam Is Dead
Name of the Game Was Murder
Rebecca
Red Pony
Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon
Return of the King
River
Road From Home
Road to Memphis
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry
Sixteen Short Stories

So Far From the Bamboo Grove
Song of the Trees
Souder
Summer of My German Soldier
Summer to Die
Sumurai and the Long-nosed Devil
Tales of Mystery and Suspense
Talking Earth
Thief in the Village
Tituba of Salem Village
Tom Sawyer
Treasure Island
True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle
Two Towers
Upstairs Room
We Have Always Lived in a Castle
Westing Game
Where the Red Fern Grows
Which Way Freedom
White Fang w/Call of Wild
Witch of Blackbird Pond
Witness
Words by Heart
Year of Impossible Goodbyes